



3D CIVIL AFFAIRS GROUP

DETACHMENT H



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DETACHMENT H COMMANDER

LT COL JAMES GRIFFIN

Dear Family and Friends,

Good day. I hope all is well and be reassured we are all fine. As any newsletter goes to press, you most likely have heard from your loved ones here and know about our story thus far. (I hope you have been communicating. Some of us have less opportunity for emails then others due to location). But at the risk of leaving anyone out, here are some of the things we have been up to.

For those who said good bye to us on the beach at Camp Pendleton, thank you for coming. Your showing was very impressive and warmed our hearts to see you there. As hard as it was to say good bye, heading to Hawaii gave us something to look forward to. We needed to link up with 3d Bn, 3d Marines for transportation forward. We did link up but for 27 of us, we got bumped do to an aircraft swap. Except for team 4 that is; Major Howell and others went forward. The bump left the remaining 27 in Waikiki for a few more days. The airline paid for our meals there, at the IHOP. We never ate so many pancakes. It was about this time when we learned we needed 5 CA teams. To create the fifth team, Capt Swanson, and others were formed together to create team 5. Then it was off to Chicago; then a bus to Rockford, Illinois. We stayed about 16 hours there, and then headed east. First stop was in Germany for refuel, then to Manas airfield in Kyrgyzstan for another 18 hours. It was nice and cool. Snow-peaked mountains could be seen in the distance. Next we flew a C-130 to Camp Leatherneck and linked up with Col Drake at Division, and Col Lebidine, now working as the RC (SW) C-9. That's Regional Command (southwest), Combined staff, Civil military Operations. We did the meet and greet then off to Forward Operation Base (FOB) Dwyer.

This base is huge. Imagine something about 4 miles by 6 miles but it's mostly contained in the center near the airfield. This is where we linked up with the advance party. It was nice to see familiar faces. After some initial training at Dwyer, we all headed to our supported battalions except for those on the headquarters det. After about 10 days, I was then asked to work at the Marjeh District Center where I remain now.

Everyone is doing well and working hard. We have had few colds, (imagine that in 110 degree heat), a fever, and other reactions to the environment. This place is hot, and full of dust. Imagine baby power up to 1 foot thick! It's not like that everywhere, just the roads. When the wind blows, visibility drops to less than 100 yards. There are also the most amazing dust devils here. As far as hard work, well we are engaging the locals, building wells, refurbishing schools, and mosques, improving roads, and many more projects. All this requires lots of training on the Commanders Emergency Relief Program (money), and key leader engagements. We are doing this to build the Afghan government and make people believe in it, and we are making progress. It's slow but is coming along. Rome was not built in a day but Helmond province will be done in less time. Once the government can take the lead in security and few other areas, we will all be coming home.

DETACHMENT HQ

DETACHMENT EXECUTIVE OFFICER	MAJOR DAVID COX
DETACHMENT CHIEF	MSGT RAY SIDES
DETACHMENT CERP NCOIC	SGT MURGUIA



CAG Families: The Detachment HQ is attached to Regimental Combat Team-7 where we serve as the liaison between the Regimental Commanding Officer, his staff, and the supported infantry Battalions (where our Marines are assigned). We also work hand-in-hand with the Civil Affairs staff at our Higher Headquarters—1st Marine Division and I MEF (where another group of 3dCAG Marines are employed, including Colonel Lebidine!). The Det HQ has been extremely busy supporting the administrative and planning requirements of the Regiment, the Battalions, and the CA Teams, as well as developing and monitoring numerous projects throughout the area. As a roving Civil Affairs Team, Major Cox, MSgt Sides, and Sgt Murguia have facilitated numerous projects to include the construction of several permanent and temporary school buildings, the development of an adult literacy program, and the creation of a Post-Treatment Ambulatory Service for locals that were treated at Coalition healthcare facilities. In the process, we have made our mark on the redevelopment of local communities and made new friends, especially our honorary 3dCAG members—LCpl Heather Stark and Major Tuan Pham. Thank you for your love and support!



TEAM 1

TEAM LEADER CAPTAIN THOMAS MCAVOY
 TEAM CHIEF GYSGT FRANK GARCIA

Team 1 (aka - Team America) is composed of Capt McAvoy, Capt Nelson, GySgt Garcia, GySgt Hutalla, Sgt RodriguezPonciano, Cpl Hazel, LCpl RamirezSalas and LCpl Stepney. We are currently having fun in the sun in different places in the Garmsir District of Helmand Province.

Capt McAvoy is staying busy out here as the team leader and the project manager. Some routine business includes taking visits to meet the District Governor as well as choosing contractors for projects that will help the community and raise the morale of the locals.

Capt Nelson, as the project purchasing officer, is making sure that all the documents are accurate and that all project money is accounted for. He has also had the opportunity to visit all the team members at their company positions, assisting them where possible.



GySgt Hutalla is with Lima Company in central Garmsir. He is creating a lot of good rapport with the locals by doing assessments in their villages and helping Lima Company's purchasing officer set up small-scale projects for the Afghans.



LCpl RamirezSalas is with GySgt Hutalla at Lima Company's position. He is also engaged with local elders and is helping Lima Company set up various projects. He has been actively gathering information that allows our leaders to have a better understanding of key leaders and key events in the area.

Cpl Hazel is with Kilo Company in the northern part of Garmsir district. He facilitates Key Leader Engagements and goes on patrols to find out the key sources of instability. This enables his fellow Marines to provide the Afghans solutions to their priority grievances.

Sgt RodriguezPonciano is enjoying 12 kilometer strolls down the Helmand River. He is with Weapons Company in southern Garmsir district. He has been adopted by the Alizai tribe and given the Pashtoon name of Radio Khan. He has made great strides in improving relationships with the locals in the area, and he has helped Weapons Company get some good small-scale projects started.



Gunny Garcia is with India Company in south central Garmsir. He has been busy with his responsibilities working alongside the company purchasing officer who identifies and implements small-scale projects. He has also spent a good deal of time working with the numerous elders who are resisting Taliban efforts in the area.



LCpl Stepney has jumped right into his newly-discovered role as the Tactical Fiscal/Administrative Clerk. He assists Capt McAvoy and Capt Nelson in handling the large amounts of paperwork necessary to request approval for the larger projects. He has also gone out on a couple of patrols in the northern part of Garmsir district in order to assess some small-scale projects.

The time is definitely flying by as we all stay busy with a hectic schedule of meetings, business negotiations, patrols, and administrative requirements. It's hard to believe we left California nearly two months ago. Yet, already, we can see some of the differences we are making in Afghanistan. It's a very rewarding feeling, even if it's also exhausting. Everyone is staying motivated as we conduct our mission to help the Afghans stabilize their country. We miss all our loved ones and friends, and appreciate all the letters and care packages – please keep them coming! It's hard to describe how much they lift our spirits. Thanks for all the support and understanding. We'll talk to you soon!

TEAM 2

Team Leader: Major Howell
 Team Chief: GySgt Rodriguez
 Team: Cpl Fields; LCpl Roman;
 LCpl Campos

To our families and loved ones:

Our time here in the Helmand Province started at a blistering pace for Team 2. We are a part of Task Force Highlander in support of the 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion and have been focusing on helping the local population break the drug nexus by helping them transition from illicit crops like Poppy and Marijuana, to wheat, corn and other licit agriculture. It is a daunting task which requires many patrols to remote water sources and a lot of interaction with the local farming community, most of whom



Cpl Fields on Patrol

live under the constant shadow of the Taliban. Temperatures where we are at routinely reach 120 to 130 degrees Fahrenheit. The patrols are long...and the gear is heavy. Yet the Marines remain spirited and I continually get compliments from the infantry Companies they support about how physically hard my Marines are as well as how knowledgeable they are of their craft. It is true.

Upon our arrival the Marines were quick to identify the soil and water deficiencies related to agriculture throughout our area of operations. With only 5 Marines now on this Team Cpl Fields, LCpl Campos and LCpl Roman often operate independently under the careful tutelage and wis-



Out on patrol; GySgt Rodriguez drawing pictures in his notebook for the children.

dom of GySgt Rodriguez as well as my own distant guidance wherever required. As a rule, my own intervention is rarely necessary. They are doing a marvelous job of finding the important information we need in order to aid in our conduct of this counterinsurgency. They are also very popular among the local populace. The people enjoy talking with them and children in particular like interacting with the Marines while we are on patrol. The Marines have also demonstrated their competence driving heavy armored vehicles through rough terrain. Many of our operations require lengthy mounted patrols to reach our distant objectives. LCpl Campos in particular never has to be coached on when to hit the accelerator when we are approaching heavy sand or a river crossing. There is not much “down” time, but with the little we have, I am happy to hear the Marines



LCpl Campos and LCpl Roman Facilitating Payments to Local Contractor's

often speak of loved ones—their wives, children, girlfriends, families and friends.

Plato says that the guardians of a free Republic should be “viciously loyal” to the people they protect. Moreover that the guardians should answer to a “different set of laws” than the people they serve. They should set a higher standard both morally and physically. This is how a free Republic remains free. For Plato, to be a guardian is more than just a noble craft. It is a high and holy calling. These Marines are doing particularly well at their craft. I am very proud of them. I know their loved ones are too. Thank you for your emails, letters, care-packages, your love and support. God bless and

Semper Fidelis



LCpl Roman at the CMOC with one of the many children his efforts will benefit.

TEAM 3



Team Leader: Captain Stanton Lee

Capt. Lee takes a moment to pose for a picture with some Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers before going out on a civil-military patrol. The Marines do almost every patrol alongside Afghan security forces. This partnering allows the local populace to see their Army taking part in their security and the U.S. Forces in more of a support role. This is very important when conducting counterinsurgency operations.

Assistant Team Leader: GySgt Jose Marquez

On the team's very 1st day in Marjeh, the team helped host a shura (gathering) of locals. The shura included the District Governor and ANA Battalion Commander as guest speakers. GySgt Marquez takes a moment to take a picture as the locals make their way in and find somewhere to sit before the event starts. There were an estimated 300-400 Afghans in attendance which was the best showing to date. Marines hosting shuraas shows respect for the Afghan's culture.



Team Chief: SSgt Peter Craner

Part of the Civil Affairs Team's job is to help out the locals with projects they do in order to stabilize the infrastructure of Afghanistan. SSgt Craner is seen here paying a contractor for digging a well in the local area. Before any project can start, coordination with the villagers, district governor, and other international aid organizations is conducted to ensure the need and avoid duplicate or redundant work.

Team Corpsman: HM2 James "Doc" Bellar

HM2 Bellar greets an Afghan boy as he patrols through a local bazaar. Aside from being a pay agent in a Civil Affairs role Doc, as his moniker implies, is also the team's primary medical support. Along with the normal combat load that all military personnel have to don while out on patrol, Doc also has his 1st aide and combat trauma gear to weigh him down.





Pay Agent: Sergeant Kevon Blake

All suited-up before a patrol Sgt Blake is taking some time for himself to catch up on some reading and take advantage of the air conditioning his sleeping area has to offer. As a pay agent he is partnered up with a purchasing officer to be able to spend the funds as directed. Pay agents and purchasing officers are in constant demand. Sgt Blake learned this first-hand when he spent USD \$25,000 in his first week on the job.

Pay Agent: Sergeant Steven Lucero

Out on a Civil Affairs project— assessment patrol at the local bazaar Sgt Lucero stops for a quick photo as the team checks up on the progress of on-going work. Assessing possible project sites and checking in on the status of current projects helps the Civil Affairs team keep track of work and funding while enabling them to help stabilize the local economy.



Civil-Military Administrator: LCpl Bryan Kim

Upon seeing this small fruit & snack shop during a patrol in the local bazaar where the shop owner was using South Korean flags as shade LCpl Kim poses for a photo. Strangely enough the name of this open-air market is Kim's Bazaar. Often dealing with issues at the Civil-Military Operation Center (CMOC) LCpl Kim deals with a variety of tasks and has daily encounters with the locals who come to the CMOC to settle their claims.

Telecommunicator: LCpl Jorge Martinez

Out on a civil affairs assessment patrol in a village in the Karez-E Saydiz region of Marjeh, LCpl Martinez is captured here gathering atmospheric data from the locals. Asking locals a series of prescribed questions allows commanders to know what needs the Afghans in his battlespace have, as well as their thoughts on the Marines in the area. LCpl Martinez' aptitude for socializing gives him an edge at both interacting with the Afghans and as the team's radio operator.



TEAM 4

Since Team Nawa began training at Camp Pendleton, we have tried to figure each other out. Some of our biggest questions were: Would Master Sergeant Sargeant catch Corporal Koenig and Lance Corporal Valadez during the PFT? And: How much money would Staff Sergeant Patzer spend on rims?

With all of those questions answered and the long goodbyes behind us, we are now tasked to bring hope and compassion to Afghans, young and old. With the collective life experience each Marine and sailor brings with them, success is inevitable.

Upon arrival in Afghanistan, we had to say goodbye again as SSgt Patzer and LCpl Valadez were selected to support Third Battalion, Sixth Marines and headed off to Marjeh with Captain Swanson as their new team leader.

We finally got to Nawa and the team split so we could support different companies within Third Battalion, Third Marines. The battalion has supported us marvelously with near seamless assimilation. Our primary role is to advise the commanders on Civil Military Operations.

Major J.R. Rinaldi, Captain Ken Bomongcag and Master Sergeant Sean Sargeant support the battalion headquarters and a rifle company from their post at Patrol Base Jaker in the Nawa District Center. Most of the day revolves around coordination of large and



Wahidi, our interpreter, and "Capt Ken" taking a break

small scale projects and meeting with local leaders and Afghan citizens. We have learned a little bit of the language, "Tsengay" means "How are You?" and "Juri Buhairh" means "I am fine" The spelling may be off but the meanings have proved helpful in many basic conversations. We are sure to learn quite a bit more. But a night at PB Jaker would not be complete without having dinner at the district governor's house. Recently promoted Sergeant Brandon Koenig and HM1 (Doc) Joseph Jafek have been working to identify to the most pressing needs of the people in their area. They have determined that school renovations, a sustainable clinic and clean drinking water are the priorities to improve the quality of life. Their goal by the time we leave is to see the girl's school in Manglazai renovated, an operational clinic built, and wells for as many families as possible. So far they have installed over a half a dozen wells, including one at the school and are working to begin the process of renovating that school. Doc Jafek has worked closely with the local pharmacist in identifying the needs of his clinic and ways in which we can help. Lastly, small business loans are increasing.

Sergeant Christopher Lewis continues works closely with the local populace in developing projects. He is working hard on improving water distribution, road networks and electricity. He is determined to ensure the contractors we hire give us the best possible price and work hard OR ELSE! As he puts it, "I Just want to make sure we aren't getting ripped off". He doesn't hesitate to ask a question and will search for a solution. He is our own "Bourne Supremacy" Team Nawa would not be complete without Lance Corporal Lopez. He has performed remarkably well and has made a great impression on his company commander. He is the 'go to guy' for them. He has attended "Shura" meetings, scheduled projects and always finds the time to write his reports. The company speaks highly of him.

It is hard to believe that we have been here a month already. The days are long but the weeks are short. It is getting hotter but thankfully, we have A/C and cold water. The kids who gather at the gate to learn a little English and make friends with Marines will even bring us cold sodas, among other things, for a nominal fee, of course. We pass the time by watching movies, reading mail from home, and trying to get a good internet connection. It goes without saying that a day doesn't go by when we don't think of our loved ones at home. We all miss the good ole' USA, but we are all keenly aware how important our job is. We look forward to returning knowing that we truly made a difference during our time here in Afghanistan.



MSgt Sargeant on patrol looking at projects

TEAM 5

Greetings from Marjeh, Afghanistan. Your Marines and Sailor were greeted with a surprise when they arrived in Afghanistan when they were informed they were selected to form a new team and sent to work with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment in Marjeh. Since that time in May, the Team has responded incredibly by quickly learning to work with new personnel and getting down to the important work of civil affairs.

The Marines and our "Doc" have been the face of the Marines here in Marjeh. Team 5 is currently operating four CMOCs in Marjeh where the local nationals come in to interact with the Military. Staff Sergeant Miguel Rivera, HM2 Glenn Duffy, and Lance Corporal Louis Valdez are working at the district center, the heart of Marjeh where all the government officials work. Corporal Richard Valdez and Lance Corporal Oscar Cedeno are working at the Koru Chareh Bazaar CMOC in central Marjeh. Sergeant Richard Marasigan is working in Western Marjeh and Staff Sergeant Stephen Patzer is working at the Balakino Bazaar in Southern Marjeh.

At each one of these locations, the Marines (and of course Doc) are using the skills they learned back in California. These include the Pashto words they learned, how to use an interpreter and how to run a CMOC. But the most important thing they are doing is building relationships with the people and helping them make a better life for their families.

Thank you for all the support you have given your Marines and Sailor. Your messages, letters, and packages is the fuel that keeps the guys motivated and working towards the goal of a stable Marjeh.

Warmest Regards,
Captain Benjamin Swanson
Team Leader – Team 5

HM2 Duffy has been assigned as a pay agent and has been working long hours with local people regarding payment for many of their issues brought to the Marines. Additionally, HM2 "Doc" Duffy has assisted with the medical needs of the Marines, Afghan National police and injured locals at the government center



LCpl Valdez motivation to help the local people coming to the CMOC (Civil Military Operations Center) on the daily basis has helped him develop a great sense of connection and good relations with the local populace visiting the government center. LCpl Valdez maintains the CMOC record book of the people visiting the CMOC as well as tracking the number of claims and quick impact projects awarded.

SSgt Rivera is the project officer assigned to the district government center and assigned as the SNCOIC for Team-5. SSgt Rivera works with contractors coming to the government center and ensures fair bid processes for projects that have been nominated. SSgt Rivera also participates in Shuras (meetings) with local elders and Local Afghan government officials to ensure coordination between the locals and the Marines.



Team 5 members discussing past events of the Civil Military Operations Center at Marjeh District Center.

Lt to Rt - Capt. Swanson, HM2 Duffy, LCpl Valadez and LCpl Cedeno

